

Culture, public policy and young children's development: The case of children of undocumented urban immigrants

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Overview

- Young children of undocumented immigrant parents in the U.S.
 - Demographic overview
 - How cultural and demographic approaches to developmental science have failed this group
 - Apparent reasons not to worry about this group's developmental prospects
 - Why these reasons are unconvincing
 - Integrating cultural, contextual and demographic perspectives: an agenda to advance research, policy and practice for this group

Demographic Overview (Passel, 2005)

- Estimated 10.3 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2004
- Most have arrived since 1990
- 55% of children of undocumented parents are U.S.-born (i.e., citizen children in “mixed-status” families)
- Data I will present: relevant to this group

Two dominant approaches to the study of this group and why they have failed them

- Research on health and school readiness disparities – typically uses traditional SES indicators and a limited set of family process measures (e.g., the HOME measure) to explain disparities. Neglects experiences relevant to undocumented status.
- Cultural theorists examine parental goals, values as indicators of family socialization and cultural transmission for these groups; however, too often not linked to contextual experiences.
- Neither directly addresses citizenship status or many of the daily experiences of being undocumented
- IRB issues a concern but *everyday experiences potentially associated with being undocumented* could be assessed.

CRCDE Birth Cohort Study

- Center for Research on Culture, Development and Education Birth Cohort Study
- Mothers and newborns recruited from three NYC hospitals serving low-income populations of target ethnicities (Mexican, Dominican, U.S.-born African American, Chinese) by bilingual research staff
- 374 mothers of newborn infants:
 - **114 African American (100% 2nd+ generation)**
 - **113 Dominican (86% 1st generation)**
 - **93 Mexican (100% 1st generation): note: MX births > DR births for first time, 2000-2005**
 - **54 Chinese (100% 1st generation); high rates of return to China in first 6 months**

CRCDE Birth Cohort Study: Assessment Schedule

- Baseline interviews with mothers in hospitals' post-partum wards
- Phone interviews at 1 month and 6 months
- 14-Month home visit (2-3 hours): survey, videotaped observation of mothers and children, direct child assessment
- 24-Month home visit (2-3 hours): survey, videotaped observation of mothers and children, direct child assessment

CRCDE Birth Cohort: Embedded Qualitative Study

- Qualitative Subsample:
 - Stratified random subsample of 28 families
 - Families visited every 8-10 weeks from child age 8 months through age 24 - 34mos
 - 7-10 visits total per family
- Semi-Structured Interviews (6 total)
 - 90 minutes (average)
 - In mother's native language
- Participant Observation (all visits) with extensive field notes

CRCDE Birth Cohort:

Likely variation in undocumented status across groups

From other studies:

Mexicans: Highest proportions undocumented

Dominicans: Moderate proportions

African Americans: All U.S.-born

Historical reasons for difference between
Mexicans and Dominicans

Most of rest of today's data: comparison of
Mexicans to Dominicans and African
Americans

Apparent reasons not to worry about this group

- Mexicans report lower levels of economic hardship than Dominicans, African Americans
- More recent immigrants to US tend to report lower levels of everyday discrimination due to race/ethnicity
- Mexicans report higher levels of system justification (perceived fairness of US society as a whole) than African Americans, highest among our 3 groups (Godfrey, 2008)
- Mexicans unanimously report US government as more generous than MX re: children, families (Yoshikawa, Rivera, Chaudry, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005):

Perceptions of Government Generosity, Corruption and Unfairness

- All immigrant mothers cited generosity of US (comparisons to Mexico, China, DR), despite some of them only being eligible for very minimal support.
- Views of countries of origin different: corruption cited more re: Mexico and DR
- *[Mother from Puebla] “People who are farther away from Mexico City are going to receive less help”*
- *In DR “the government doesn’t help its citizens because the big bosses steal the money. That’s why a country like DR is poor cause people steal the money instead of redistributing it like here in the U.S. In the DR, you pay taxes but the government keeps the money to themselves.”*

Reasons to worry about this group

- Lowest levels of parent education, income among undocumented relative to documented
- Higher levels of food insecurity in households headed by non-citizens, relative to immigrant citizens (Van Hook & Balistreri, 2006; Kalil & Chen, in press)
- Highest rates of dropout among Latino groups with highest proportions of undocumented in NYC (nearly 50% MX 16-19 yr olds not in school or don't have high school diploma; Smith, 2005)
- Our data:
 - MX: significantly higher #'s of people per room in housing
 - MX: significantly lower occupational complexity of jobs
 - MX: Lower than African Americans on expressive vocabulary using Mullen; lower than Dominicans using MacArthur

US frameworks of disadvantage and poverty may be inadequate

- Traditional theories of disadvantage (poverty-based) or discrimination may not capture everyday experiences of being undocumented
- **Social exclusion theory:** A more promising theory to inform research on this group (Alba, 2005; Burchardt, LeGrand, & Piachaud, 2002; Lenoir, 1974)
- Indicators of social marginalization and disadvantage beyond poverty

How social exclusion and poverty are different concepts

- Social exclusion applied to citizenship:
- Low participation in and access to institutions and resources driven by citizenship status:
 - Public – e.g., education, legal, health care, policy
 - Private – social institutions, organizations, networks
- Not simply material disadvantage
- Informs European literature on immigration
- Overlooked in US work (Kamerman & Kahn, 2002; Micklewright, 2002)
- EU has embraced the concept (e.g., National Action Plans Against Poverty and Social Exclusion)

Everyday experiences of social exclusion

- 1) Lack of access to resources requiring identification
- 2) Lower levels of access to policies
- 3) Lower levels of information about and take-up of policies and programs for which eligible
- 4) Lack of recourse to formal assistance and the need to “stay quiet” in housing, work, legal, and other contexts

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Access to institutional resources that require identification

- Undocumented immigrants more likely to avoid accessing resources that require identification.
- Resources that require identification:
 - Formal banking (checking account, savings account)
 - Credit
 - Drivers' license
- Index measure created

Do rates of access to resources requiring identification differ?

	Full Sample	Mexicans	Dominicans	African Americans
<i>Percentage</i>				
Checking account	61%	37%	79%	66%
Savings account	56%	36%	73%	58%
Credit Card	46%	27%	63%	47%
Driver's License	54%	31%	76%	51%

Conceptual Model: Access to Resources Requiring Identification

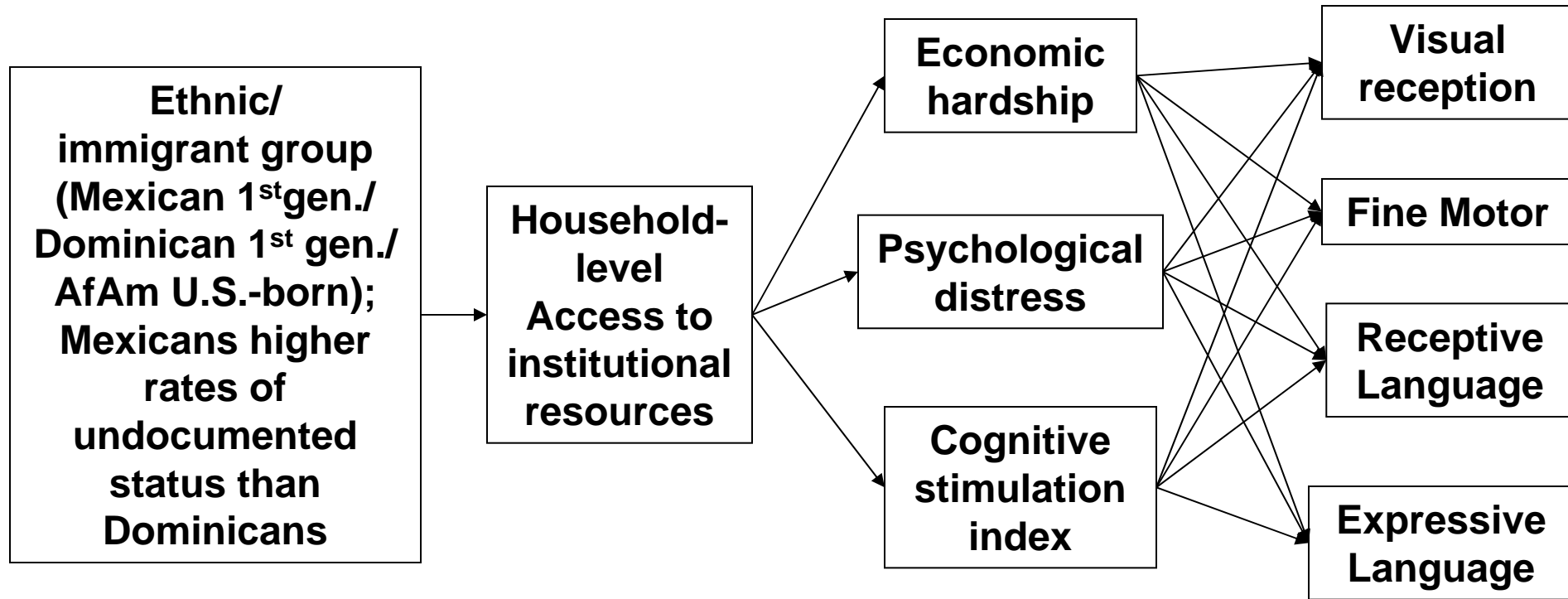


Figure 1. Institutional Resources Model: Full Sample.

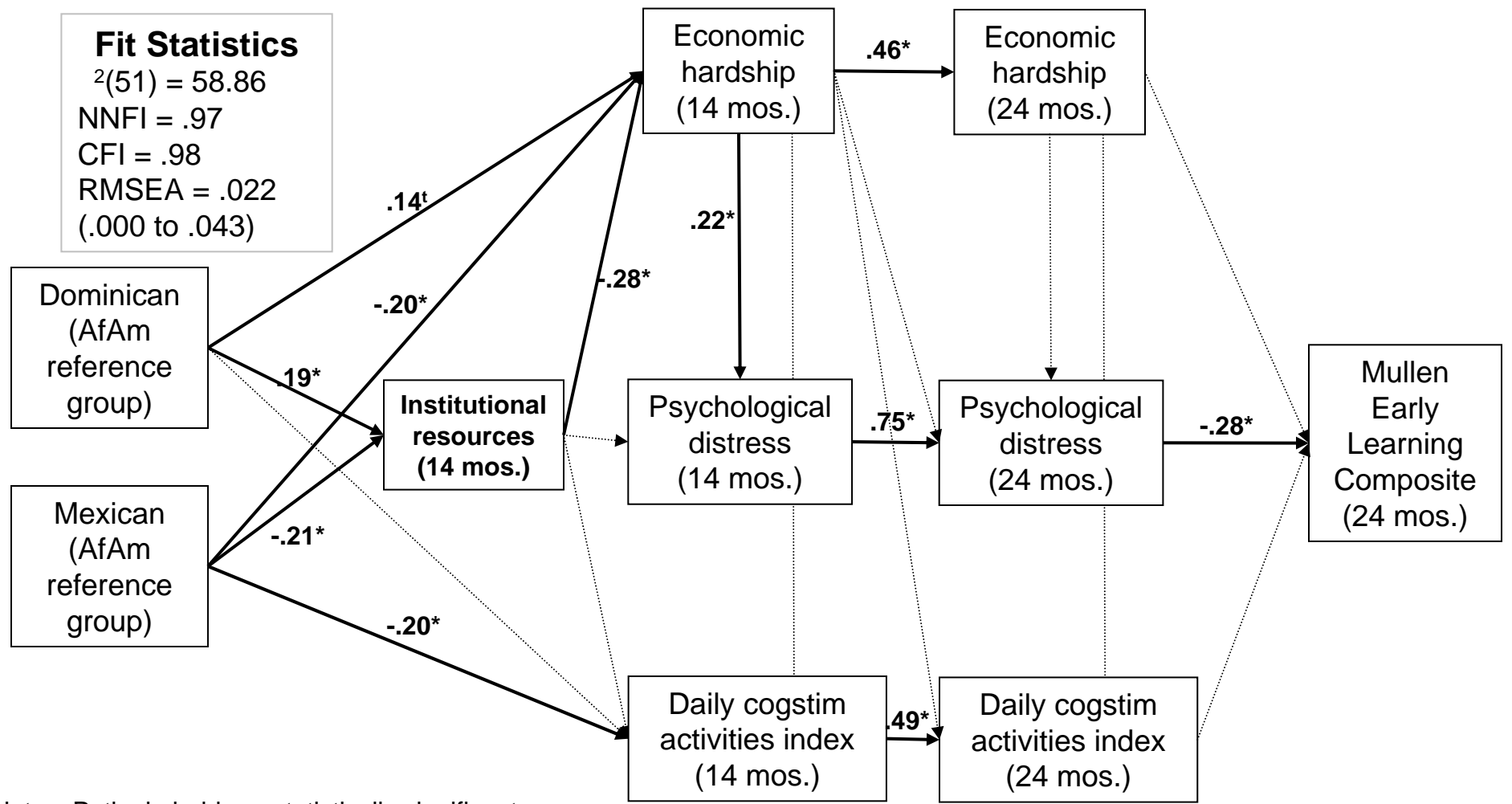
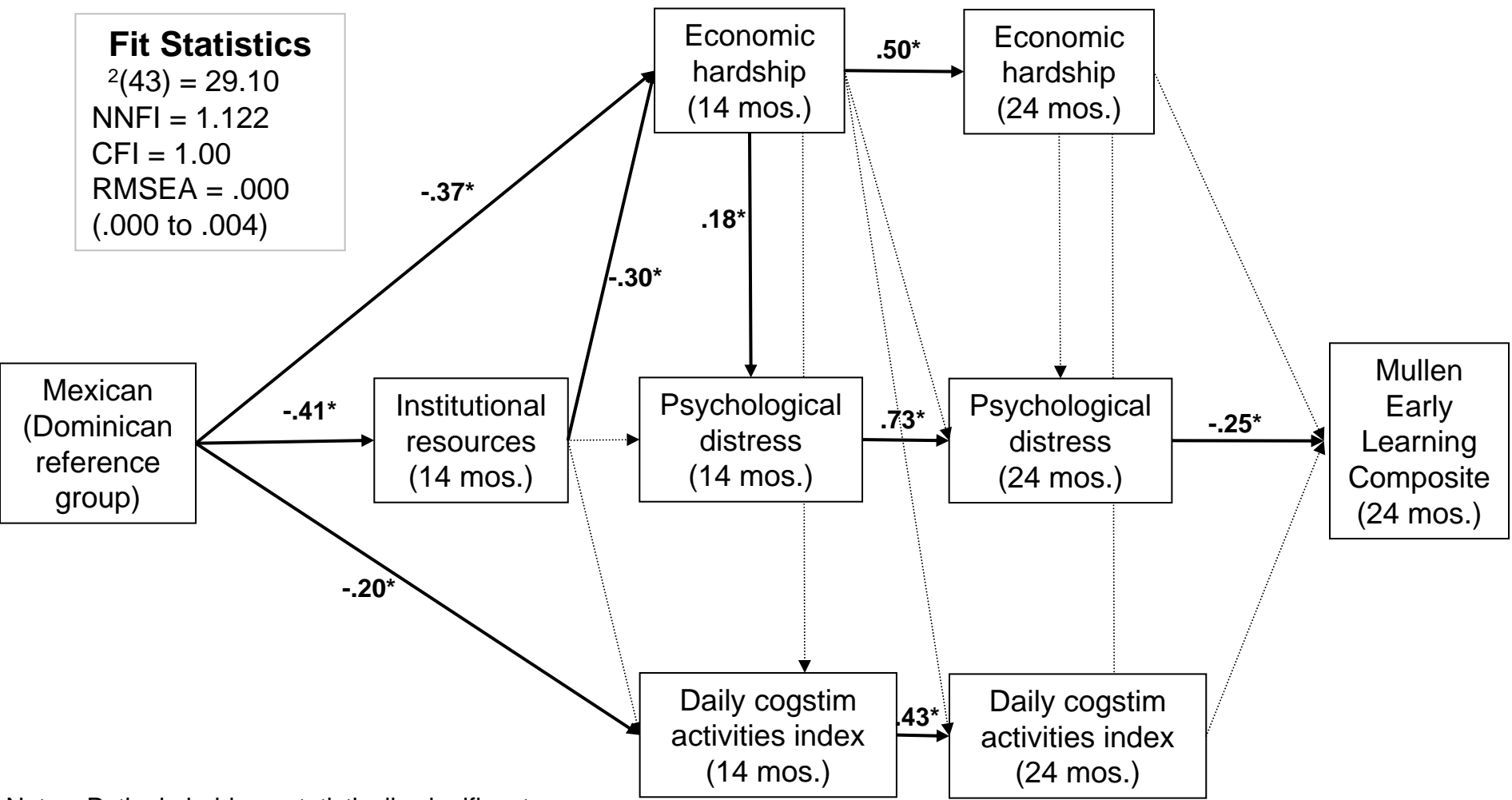


Figure 2. Institutional Resources Model: Mexicans and Dominicans



Notes: Paths in bold are statistically significant
Numbers in diagram are standardized path coefficients

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Lower levels of access to and take-up of policies

- **Undocumented parents with US-born children in NYC:**
- No access to Medicaid for themselves
- No access to public housing
- Access to prenatal (and postnatal care up to 6 weeks) in NY
- Access to emergency medical care for themselves
- U.S.-born children are **fully eligible (e.g., for Food Stamps, TANF, CCDF child care subsidies, Title I, well-child visits, etc.)**; however, undocumented parents often do not take up programs, policies for eligible children (Capps et al., 2005; Matthews & Ewen, 2006)

Lower levels of take-up of policies for which US-born children are eligible

- Low rates of use of preschool education, relative to children of native parents (Hernandez, Denton, & McCartney, in press)
- Low rates of use of Food Stamps, health insurance coverage, TANF, relative to children of citizen immigrant parents (Kalil & Chen, in press, ECLS-K)

Program Use at 14 months (since child's birth)

	Full Sample	Mexicans	Dominicans	African Americans
<i>Percentage</i>				
WIC	98%	98%	100%	95%
Food Stamps	60%	59%	52%	69%
Child Care Subsidies*	21%	2%	17%	35%
TANF†	28%	12%	20%	46%
Public Housing/Section 8†	27%	15%	21%	39%
SSI	6%	7%	0%	11%
Unemployment Benefits	5%	0%	6%	6%

* Racial/ethnic differences are significant across all groups.

† Mexicans and Dominicans significantly different from African Americans.

Reasons for low take-up of policies and programs

- Why?
- Fewer sources of information about policy (ethnographic data; Yoshikawa, Rivera, Chaudry & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005);
- Mexicans report significantly lower levels of report of *advice-related* but not other (child care, financial, e.g.) forms of social support (Roy, 2008) than African Americans
- Beliefs about consequences of program use

Fears of Negative Consequences of Benefit Use

- Mexican families' concern that their U.S.-born children would be required to "pay back" the government for any public aid they receive now

Mexican mother:

M: Ladies, like when I went to the park, they told me [about welfare.] When [I] was not working, a Puerto-Rican lady told me that I should ask for that, that for almost all the children, the ladies ask for that help. That I should ask for that help, that the majority of people ask for help, that children born here should. But my husband doesn't want to. I: And why doesn't he want to?

*M: He says no because, **according to a guy who was telling him that when they are older they send them to war. And he wouldn't like that for him [baby]. Because of the same, if the government helps us, after, that is, they will force us to help. They count on him, and that's why he doesn't want to.***

Fears of Negative Consequences of Benefit Use

Mexican mother explained:

*I tell you that as much as a girl wants to study [go to university], that the government gives us the loan, so that they can go to university.... And you say that because of their work, or sometimes they [use benefits] for everything. So if the person or the person's mother [takes advantage of this aid], then **there isn't much left [for student loans] because it's like their savings that the government is going to lend them.***

Everyday experiences of social exclusion

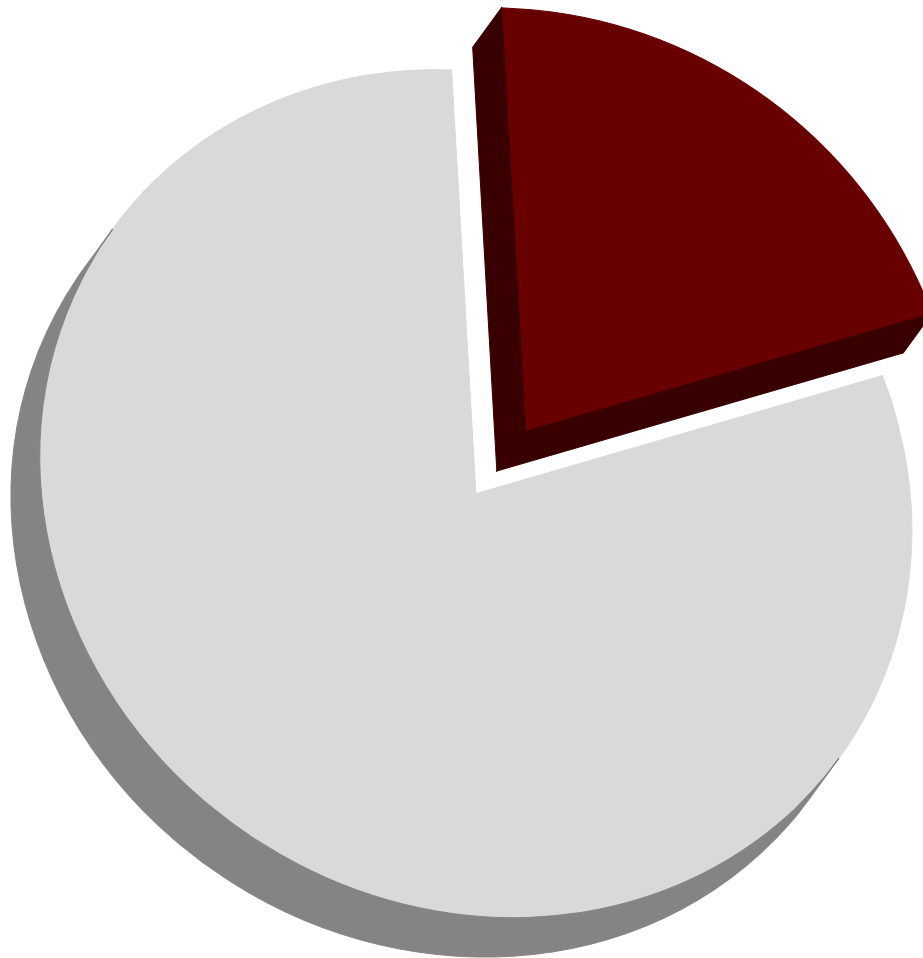
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Lack of Recourse: Housing Quality

(Holding & Yoshikawa, 2008)

- **She says it makes it hard to get a lease; without a lease, the super can neglect upkeep.**
- The apartment building has been in horrible condition, and the super does a very poor job of maintaining the place. Aside from having had the ceiling cave in [and mold grow], the walls are constantly being scratched at by rats. She has about three holes that she covers up with glue traps so that the rats don't come in to their apartment. The kitchen sink was leaking causing the wood from the cabinet underneath to rot. The toilet in the bathroom was also loose and water would leak out from the base, causing the bathroom to stink whenever they would use it. Since bathroom is right next to the kitchen, this especially bothered her.
- **This mother's child: diagnosed with chronic respiratory condition at 12 months**

Rates of hospitalization, 0-24 mos, Mexican infants (Holding & Yoshikawa, 2008)



20% of
Mexican infants
hospitalized in
the first 24
months;

46% of those
hospitalized:
for respiratory
symptoms

The need to “stay quiet” in formal settings

- Mothers who work may be more sensitive to necessity to stay quiet and well-behaved
- In our sample:
 - ***Working MX mothers more likely than non-working MX mothers to value qualities of proper demeanor (obedience, respect, self-control) in young children (Hunter Torres, 2008)***
- May be due to hierarchical nature of low-wage work positions, particularly those with low complexity
- May also be due to need to “stay quiet” in the workplace due to undocumented status

Recency of waves of immigration, language use, and early language development

- Most recent low-income waves of immigrants most likely to be undocumented (e.g., MX vs. DR; Fujianese vs. Cantonese)
- Dominican infants more likely to be exposed to English, even if parent is recently arrived
- Dominican 24-month olds' higher rates of expressive vocabulary relative to Mexicans' due to their English vocabulary (Spanish vocabulary size identical); Lucchese, Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, Dalebroux, & Skolnick (today, 4:45)
- Other work on code-switching among Dominican young children and its benefits (Caspe, Rodriguez, Melzi, & Kennedy, 2008)

In-process assessments to further explore everyday experiences of undocumented status

- Lack of recourse in crisis situations:
- Likelihood of contacting or complaining to authority figures in situations of everyday injustice:
 - Boss owes you money but refuses to pay you
 - Drug dealers on the street
 - Experiences of discrimination towards self or child, in work or school
 - Someone did shoddy job in a service context
- Length of repair of housing in disrepair

Integrating cultural, demographic, and contextual perspectives

- Traditional cultural assessments of beliefs re: child development should be related to contexts of everyday experience of being undocumented
- And supplemented for policy purposes with examination of beliefs about policies, their consequences, and experiences of implementation
- Family processes associated with cultural transmission of beliefs – link to constructs specific to policy and to experiences of **social exclusion** of groups being studied
- These experiences may not match traditional US measures and theories of disadvantage (e.g., economic hardship; usual measures of discrimination)

Lessons for Research, Policy and Practice

- Measure experiences of undocumented status that go beyond traditional measures of economic hardship:
 - Lack of recourse (repairs, e.g., delayed)
 - Housing quality
 - Access to financial services
 - Access to resources requiring identification
 - Labor law violations
- Examine their associations with developmental outcomes
- Policy and practice implications: interventions to increase take-up of interventions and policies for which children of undocumented immigrants are eligible (e.g., literacy interventions; Head Start; preschool; health care)

Manu Chao on Undocumented Urban Immigrants

*Fantasma en la ciudad
Mi vida va prohibida
Dice la autoridad
Solo voy con mi pena
Sola va mi condena
Correr es mi destino
Por no llevar papel*

Ghost in the city
My life is prohibited
Says the authority
I travel only with my pain
My sentence is solitary
To run is my destiny
For not having papers

From "Clandestino"